

ABSTRACT

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SUBJECT: Outdoor recreation and open space resource planning and management

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AGENCY: Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program
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and
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ABSTRACT: This document represents the seventh edition of Rhode Island's plan for outdoor recreation, conservation, and open space. The plan establishes state goals and policies and includes a five-year Action Agenda.

The plan was approved by the State Planning Council as an element of the State Guide Plan and by the National Park Service, as the State of Rhode Island's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for the 2003-2008 period.

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PREFACE

Providing for the public's enjoyment of Rhode Island's outdoor environment is an important responsibility of state government. Increasingly, Rhode Islanders turn to the outdoors to relax, to have fun, to maintain their health and vigor, to understand their natural and cultural heritage, and to bring added meaning to their lives. Visitors to the state have also sought the pleasures of Rhode Island's natural environment in growing multitudes. Tourism contributes an estimated \$4.8 billion annually to the state's economy.

Provision of outdoor recreation is a mission of increasing scope, complexity, and expense, involving all levels of government, and a growing number and diversity of private entities. Rhode Islanders' love of the outdoors -- their land, their shoreline, their lakes and ponds -- has translated into an extensive public recreational estate. More people using the outdoors in many diverse fashions has meant more opportunities for user conflicts, greater stress on the resource base, demands for more areas and facilities--in short--added responsibilities and new problems for land managers and recreation providers. Today's recreation professionals must wear a multitude of hats: resource steward, activity scheduler, conflict mediator, educator, advocate, fund-raiser, and rule-enforcer. They must also be efficient since budgets traditionally lag behind needs.

The purpose of this document is to provide the effective planning needed to guide and direct the efforts of state, municipal, and private agencies as they grapple with the problems of protecting the resource base and providing recreational opportunities for present and future generations of Rhode Islander's and visitors to the state. Good planning brings all those with concerns relevant to outdoor recreation together to communicate their interests and perspectives of the vital issues. It sometimes uncovers new answers to longstanding problems; more often, but no less validly, reiterates longstanding ideas whose time has finally come. It also provides an important perspective for managers who must constantly focus on the present an opportunity to think about the future, and to formulate a vision for it.

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Adoption

This plan was adopted as Element 152 of the State Guide Plan by the Rhode Island State Planning Council on March 13, 2003 following a public hearing held on March 10, 2003.

Relation to Other Plans

The State Guide Plan is actually a collection of many individual plans that collectively present a vision for the future development of Rhode Island and strategic approaches to attaining that vision. In addition to *Ocean State Outdoors*, there are several other State Guide Plans that present important pieces of how Rhode Island should manage its precious outdoor resources. Those plans that are most directly relevant to *Ocean State Outdoors* are:

A Greener Path... Greenspace and Greenways for Rhode Island's Future
Rhode Island Rivers Policy and Classification Plan
Rhode Island Urban and Community Forest Plan
The State Historical Preservation Plan

Additionally, several plans, notably the *Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Narragansett Bay*, the *Water Supply Plan for Rhode Island*, and the *Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Plan*, speak extensively to the protection of our water resources that are critical to the resource base for much of the outdoor recreation system.

Acknowledgements

This plan is a product of the efforts of a number of individuals and groups. The State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) Steering Committee, organized by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, was instrumental in defining and scoping issues addressed in the plan, and in recommending strategies for dealing with them. Staff support of the Steering Committee's work, and development of the plan, was performed by:

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Contributions of time, insight, and thoughtful commentary were also made to the planning process by the forty-four respondents to the Survey of State and Local Recreation Professionals, by the public who participated in the public hearing on the final draft of the plan, and by a number of volunteers who reviewed drafts of the plan.

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